

Here Be Dragons - Episode Five

"Perfect Stranger"

by

Jordan Cobb

Black Lace and Laser Beams  
Productions

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SCENE ONE

INT. Corridor, U.S.S. Rusalka - DAY

Pip is crouching outside of Sick Bay, staring intently at the door.

PIP  
Come on... Come on...

Harper rounds the corner, nose buried in Legends of the Deep, and promptly trips over Pip.

HARPER  
(overlapping) What the-

PIP  
(overlapping) Ow!

The girls disentangle themselves.

HARPER  
Pippa, what are you doing?

PIP  
Nothing!

HARPER  
Nothing...

PIP  
Mostly nothing...

HARPER  
In the middle of the hallway?

PIP  
Um... yes?

HARPER  
You're not waiting for Dr. Atlas,  
so you can jump out and scare her,  
are you?

PIP  
What? No! I mean... I am waiting  
for her but... it's more like...  
like a secret mission.

HARPER  
You're spying on her?

(CONTINUED)

PIP

Spying sounds so creepy! I'm just... investigating...

HARPER

You're hiding behind a wall, staring at her door and-... are those snacks?! Pip how long have you been here?

PIP

Only ten or eleven hours...

HARPER

Pip!

PIP

Okay, FINE I'm spying on her, but ONLY because she deserves it! She's being super sketchy... She's been in the lab ALL DAY. I had to go to the bathroom **twice** but she hasn't opened that door once in the whole time I've been here!

HARPER

How do you know she didn't leave when you went to the bathroom?

PIP

(continuing as though she hasn't heard) And she's always up in the morning before everyone else... and still SO busy when everyone else is going to bed! But there are only four of us... Nobody's injured, or sick, so what is she DOING all day?

HARPER

Reading, probably. She's just a bit anti-social...

PIP

She's up to something. I just know it.

HARPER

Like what?

PIP

I don't know! Human experiments! Breeding sea monsters, or developing a biochemical weapon of mass destruction!

(CONTINUED)

HARPER

Has anyone ever told you, you have an overactive imagination?

PIP

No such thing!

HARPER

Actually-

PIP

I'VE GOT IT! She's got a secret laboratory!

HARPER

(laughing) What?

PIP

A secret lab! Of course! It all makes sense! It's so simple, yet so brilliant! We never see her around the ship, because she's hidden in a secret lab, running her insane experiments!

HARPER

Just because she's a scientist, doesn't mean she's a mad scientist, you know that right?

PIP

Then where is she all the time?

HARPER

Working! In her lab!

PIP

But which one?

HARPER

Pip, where would you even PUT a secret lab on a submarine?

PIP

Under the regular lab! Or behind a secret door!

HARPER

A secret door.

PIP

We have a library and a game room... it's not SO impossible... I

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

PIP (cont'd)  
bet this ship's riddled with secret  
passage ways, and unmapped rooms!

HARPER  
Maybe... Or, she left when you went  
to the bathroom, and you're sleep  
deprived and staring at the closed  
door to an empty room.

PIP  
Oh, she's in there alright... with  
her... beakers and her...  
microscope!

HARPER  
If you wanna know what she's doing  
so badly, why don't you just knock  
on the door and ask her?

PIP  
NO! It's too dangerous. She can't  
know I'm onto her. You have to help  
me find out what she's up to.

HARPER  
You're nuts, you know that?

PIP  
Harper, I need you! You're the only  
one I can trust! ... and Commander  
Scarlett would probably just yell  
at me.

HARPER  
And what if Atlas isn't up to  
anything?

PIP  
Alright, fine. If you think she's  
so innocent... then what's she a  
doctor OF?

HARPER  
I... I don't know... Medicine.  
Marine biology... Probably...

PIP  
If she's REALLY a doctor, then why  
doesn't she wear a lab coat?

(CONTINUED)

HARPER

I guess she thinks leather's more comfortable?

PIP

And she works for Killian...

HARPER

We ALL work for Killian, Pip.

PIP

Yeah, but she works WITH him. They're so... friendly... That's not weird at all to you?

HARPER

Probably not weird in the way you mean... But I guess we just have different tastes.

PIP

Come on, Harper! You're not even the TINIEST bit curious what she might be doing in there?

HARPER

I mean...

PIP

She's weird! I thought you liked weird things? Besides! You could be saving the world...

HARPER

... Okay, fine. But ONLY to prove to you that Dr. Atlas is a perfectly normal, unsociable person... and because if she has a secret lab, it's only fair that we know about it. AND you have to promise if we're doing this, we're not doing anything crazy, alright? We're just... keeping an eye on her. As... coworkers. Casually. Nothing... weird.

PIP

Right!

HARPER

Because we're curious. Curious coworkers. It's not spying...

(CONTINUED)

PIP  
Super casual. Nothing to see  
here... just... two gals... sitting  
in the hallway... watching a door.

HARPER  
Casually.

PIP  
Casually.

CUT TO:

2 SCENE TWO

INT. Records Room, U.S.S. Rusalka - About 30 Minutes Later

Harper and Pip are digging through one of the filing  
cabinets.

HARPER  
This is so illegal.

PIP  
We have as much right to look at  
the ship's records as anybody else  
on board.

HARPER  
Is that why you used a crowbar to  
break it open?

PIP  
What do you want me to do, ask  
Commander Scarlett?

HARPER  
You don't have to ask anybody,  
you're the chief engineer! You have  
a master key!

PIP  
... I like to be creative. Now come  
on! The blueprints have to be in  
here somewhere...

HARPER  
If it's a secret lab, why would it  
show up on blueprints?

(CONTINUED)

PIP

'Cause Killian's the one who built it, duh. He's too confident. And who looks at blueprints in this day and age anyway?

HARPER

Well, somebody must, 'cause they're not in here.

PIP

What?!

HARPER

See for yourself.

PIP

No! Who comes into the records room at this time of day, and takes the ship's blueprints?! What could you possibly want with those, in the middle of the afternoon?!

HARPER

Oh my god... Pip...

Harper pulls a file out.

PIP

Is that... Dr. Atlas's file?

HARPER

Yup.

PIP

We're not allowed to look at that...

HARPER

Nope.

She opens it and starts to flip through its contents. Pip leans over to read over her shoulder.

PIP

Oh... wow... Is it just me or does she look really good with her hair pulled up like that?

HARPER

I know...



PIP

Do you think she'd teach me how to do that? I don't know if it would curl like that though...

HARPER

Pip.

PIP

Right! Focus... Sorry.

HARPER

Doesn't say what school she went to... And... this is weird... her family information is all scratched out... Holy crap, how many languages does this woman speak?

SCARLETT

What the hell are you two doing?

Pip and Harper jump as though they've received an electric shock, and the file slips from Harper's fingers, the papers scattering everywhere. Commander Scarlett has entered the room behind them, and stares at them with her arms crossed, eyebrow raised. Harper scrambles to pick up the papers.

PIP

Ah!

HARPER

Commander Scarlett!

SCARLETT

Officer Bennett. Officer Campbell.

HARPER

Um... hi...

SCARLETT

Hi. Care to tell me why you're on the floor?

The girls exchange a look.

HARPER

I'm... stretching?

SCARLETT

Uh-huh. Officer Campbell, is that... a crowbar?

(CONTINUED)

PIP

Um... yes?

SCARLETT

Why?

PIP

For... leg stretches?

SCARLETT

Oh, yes, of course. How silly of me. So what's this?

She bends down and collects a few pieces of paper.

HARPER

No, wait!

Too late.

beat.

SCARLETT

This is Dr. Atlas's personal file.

HARPER

... yes.

SCARLETT

Do you have clearance to be reading this?

PIP

... no.

SCARLETT

Then why are you reading it?

PIP

Because... we wanted to... to...

HARPER

... to see if... she wrote down her secret stretching routine?

Because... I mean... have you seen those arms? Hah... talk about... good stretching...

SCARLETT

Are you two spying on her?

HARPER

What?! HAH! No!

PIP

Spying has an entirely negative connotation! We prefer casual browsing.

SCARLETT

Well did you find anything?

Pip and Harper exchange another look. They must have misheard.

HARPER

What?

SCARLETT

Did you find anything? Has she been sending secret coded messages? Carrying around suspicious, covered items? Oh! Did you find the entrance to her secret lab?!

PIP

You know about the secret lab?!

SCARLETT

Well... I mean... I've never seen it. But where else could she possibly go all day? She's always 'working,' but what does she ACTUALLY do?

HARPER

Am I the only one who thinks she might actually just be working?

PIP

Yes.

SCARLETT

Don't be naive, Harper. On a ship full of strangers, nobody's going to tell you half of who they really are. ... Okay, except Pip. All we know about Atlas is what she tells us, and so far, that hasn't been much.

PIP

Plus, she's being SUPER weird. She brought this on herself.

(CONTINUED)

SCARLETT

SO. Details. What have you got so far?

HARPER

Uh... Nothing yet. She went into the lab a while ago, but she hasn't come out yet...

SCARLETT

You sure she didn't leave while you two were in the bathroom or something?

PIP

(overlapping) YES!

HARPER

(overlapping, but more under her breath) No.

SCARLETT

Mm. Then we can't be sure where she is... BUT maybe if you could be assured she'd be somewhere else for, oh, I don't know... twenty minutes or so? Say, up on the bridge, dealing with some sort of medical emergency? It might give you the perfect opportunity to do some in depth sleuthing.

PIP

A distraction! Perfect!

HARPER

Wait a minute! Commander, you're endorsing this? We're not even getting yelled at? You're helping?

SCARLETT

(laughing) Oh GOD no! You're going to be breaking into Dr. Atlas's lab without probable cause, or her permission, AND you've been reading files that are WAY above your pay grade. That's illegal. I'd never let you do something THAT stupid in a million years. In fact, I haven't seen you all day. So if you Wonder Twins get yourself in trouble, that's YOUR problem.

(CONTINUED)

PIP  
(gasps excitedly) Harper, we've  
been disavowed!

HARPER  
You know that only happens when the  
higher ups think you're probably  
going to die, right?

SCARLETT  
It's a sacrifice I'm willing to  
make.

HARPER  
Great.

SCARLETT  
But if you find out ANYTHING, you  
come straight to me, got it?

PIP  
Got it! Ooh this is so exciting!

SCARLETT  
Now scram, both of you. I'll deal  
with this. You two weren't here.

Scarlett moves to pick up the rest of the files. Pip leaves,  
but Harper lingers for a moment.

HARPER  
Commander... What were you doing  
down here anyway?

SCARLETT  
Just some casual browsing.

She pulls a set of blueprints from her pocket and carefully  
sets them back to where they are supposed to be. She smiles  
at Harper, then raises an eyebrow.

HARPER  
You took the blueprints?

SCARLETT  
Of course not. They've been here  
all day. Unless... did you see  
anything, Officer Bennett?

HARPER  
... No, commander.

SCARLETT  
Thought so. Run along.

Harper eyes her commander for a moment, then turns and leaves. Scarlett moves to collect the rest of Atlas's file from the floor, and starts to riffle through it.

SCARLETT (cont'd)  
... Jesus, how many languages does  
this woman speak?

CUT TO:

3 SCENE THREE

INT. Corridor, U.S.S. Rusalka - DAY

Harper and Pip are crouched in the hallway outside of Sick Bay. Both girls duck as the door swings open, and we hear Atlas exiting.

ATLAS  
Yes, commander, I'm on my way up  
now. (voice fading, as she moves  
down the hall) Just lie back... try  
to keep your eyes closed.

PIP  
Now?

HARPER  
Wait for it... Okay, now! Go! Go!

The girls wait just long enough for Atlas's footsteps to disappear down the hall, before they race across to the unattended lab.

PIP  
WAIT!

HARPER  
What?! What's wrong?

PIP  
What if it's booby trapped?

HARPER  
(exasperated) Pip!

PIP  
She could have all kinds of  
security set ups in there! Lasers,  
or trip wires, or poison gas, or-

(CONTINUED)

HARPER

Pip, she can't DO that, it's the closest thing to a hospital we have on board!

PIP

...Oh... Right... But what if-

Harper rolls her eyes and pushes open the door. Pip gasps, and then attempts to hold her breath, waiting for the sudden burst of poisonous gas! Harper raises an eyebrow.

HARPER

You coming or what?

PIP

... Yeah, okay.

INT. Sick Bay, U.S.S. Rusalka - Moments Later

The girls duck into the lab. A small, black radio sits on one of the counters, playing faint jazzy music in the background (preferably La Vie En Rose).

PIP (cont'd)

It's so... normal.

HARPER

Told you so.

PIP

I mean it's not even creepy or anything... it just... looks like a doctor's office...

Pip looks so crestfallen, Harper can't help but to feel just a little bit guilty.

HARPER

Well... I mean... yeah, on the surface. But that's just what she WANTS us to think, right?

PIP

I guess

HARPER

Let's split up. I'll check out the wall panels, and you see if there's a secret switch on the bookcase or something. Careful with that radio.

(CONTINUED)

PIP  
(brightening) On it.

They go about their separate tasks, Harper tapping the walls to see if they're hollow, and Pip climbing up on one of the counters and pulling down all the books.

PIP (cont'd)  
Nothing here...

HARPER  
Me neither. Check the filing cabinets, I'll take a look at these shelves here.

They separate again. By this point, the radio has stopped playing, but neither of them have noticed.

HARPER (cont'd)  
(picking up bottles) Look these... Chloroform... Formaldehyde... Dimethyl Sulfoxide... Sodium Hydroxide? What kind of doctor just leaves cyanide in a glass front cabinet?

PIP  
She's got files on all of us down here! (flipping through) ... This... There's stuff on my parents in here... Why would she have this? Why does she need this?!

HARPER  
Does Scarlett know about this? She can't know about this...

PIP  
We've got to tell her.

HARPER  
But what do we do in the meantime about-

ATLAS  
Well now, what do we have here?

Dr. Atlas has silently entered the room, and is now standing in the doorway. Her dark eyes flick from one girl to the other, and she smiles.

(CONTINUED)



ATLAS (cont'd)  
Trespassers! Dear me, what am I  
going to do with you?

Pip lets out a small whimper. Atlas closes the door, which  
closes with a noise like the shutting of a tomb.

ATLAS (cont'd)  
Pippa, you look a little pale. Why  
don't you have a seat.

PIP  
(meekly) I'm okay.

ATLAS  
I said sit down. Harper, you too.

Pip sits abruptly on the floor. Harper slowly goes to sit on  
one of the examination tables.

ATLAS (cont'd)  
There... Now that we're all  
comfortable-

HARPER  
Shouldn't we get the Commander?

ATLAS  
Commander Scarlett is not at all  
well at the moment... I see no need  
to involve her in this.

PIP  
(whispering to Harper) Oh my god...  
She murdered the commander!

ATLAS  
What?

HARPER  
We're not afraid of you!

PIP  
I am.

HARPER  
No, Pip, you're not! Because we  
know what you're doing down here,  
Dr. Atlas! And you can't kill us  
both!

PIP  
Yes she can!

HARPER  
Pippa, shut up!

ATLAS  
You... You think I'm going... to  
try and kill you? Why on earth  
would I try to kill you?

Harper and Pip exchange a look.

HARPER  
Well... maybe not KILL us... We  
know about your secret lab!

ATLAS  
My... what?

HARPER  
We know you're up to something!

ATLAS  
Like what exactly?

PIP  
Something evil! You're always  
sneaking around, and 'working'...

ATLAS  
I didn't realize doing my job  
thoroughly was a crime.

PIP  
Yeah? So why do you have files on  
us, and information on our families  
down here? That's confidential!

ATLAS  
Those are medical files. I have to  
have that information in case one  
of you gets sick, and there are  
some conditions that are inherited.

PIP  
Where's Commander Scarlett?!

ATLAS  
Up on the bridge! She said she was  
feeling faint... But I forgot my  
thermometer, so I had to come back  
down here.

(CONTINUED)

HARPER

Why do you have all these creepy solutions in your cabinets? Last time I checked, doctors don't need to dose their patients with Sodium Hydroxide!

ATLAS

Bio-Chemistry is a passion of mine... The items in the standing cabinet are for recreational use! I was hoping, if we got another chance to look at those creatures, I might be able to take a more in depth look at them... And for that, I need powerful solvents, and solutions to protect the specimens from decay...

HARPER

Oh...

PIP

But that doesn't explain where you GO all day! Why do you just disappear, and never spend any time with us?

ATLAS

I... I didn't realize anyone wanted me to... You all seemed so... settled, together. I thought it might be best if I just kept to my work...

PIP

Oh...

There is an uncomfortable pause.

HARPER

Dr. Atlas... We-... we're sorry.

PIP

Yeah... sorry...

ATLAS

Did you really think I was just... going to murder you all in your sleep?

(CONTINUED)

HARPER

... No... Not really.

PIP

We just wanted to know where you go all the time. What you're doing...

ATLAS

Reading, usually. And keeping the lab in order... I have a lot of books.

HARPER

Do you-... We can help you clean up, if-

ATLAS

That's quite alright. I'll take care of it.

PIP

You sure?

ATLAS

Yes. You two run along... If you wouldn't mind just... telling Commander Scarlett I'll be with her shortly? I need a moment.

HARPER

Right... Of course...

ATLAS

Pippa? Harper? ... I would like us to be friends. And as I said, I don't think there's... any real need to involve the commander in all of this.

PIP

Thank you...

HARPER

See you at dinner?

ATLAS

Yes, I think so.

Harper and Pip exit the lab. Dr. Atlas watches them go, and once the door is closed again, she breathes out a long, slow sigh.

(CONTINUED)

ATLAS (cont'd)  
That was... too close.

She moves across the lab, and fiddles with the controls of the black radio on the counter. The music starts up again, and is quickly replaced by static and a sort of scratching sound as she adjusts the channels.

ATLAS (cont'd)  
How much of that did you catch?

KILLIAN  
(slightly muffled through the radio) Enough. That was quite the performance, Natalya. Not a dry eye left in the house.

ATLAS  
Shut up. ... Did they-

KILLIAN  
No harm done. The feed came up as soon as they tripped the sensors around the door. I had eyes on them the whole time.

ATLAS  
And?

KILLIAN  
The lab is fine. Your work is perfectly safe. They didn't even get close.

ATLAS  
Good.

beat.

KILLIAN  
You alright, darling?

ATLAS  
I'm... I'm fine. It doesn't matter.

KILLIAN  
You want them to like you.

ATLAS  
That's not my job. Whether they like me or not, I'm here to protect them, not to make friends. I don't have to be social.

(CONTINUED)

KILLIAN  
It couldn't hurt.

ATLAS  
Maybe... (pause) Any news?

KILLIAN  
Head further south, you might have  
an easier time picking up a trail  
the warmer the waters.

ATLAS  
And how's-

KILLIAN  
Recalcitrant. But she'll come  
around, now she has a bit of  
incentive.

ATLAS  
(uncomfortable) Right... I... I  
should go. I'll check in with you  
soon.

KILLIAN  
You'd better. Things here are  
progressing quickly, Natalya. Don't  
keep me waiting too long.

Killian's voice fades back into static, and the music picks up again. Atlas stares at the radio for a moment longer, then begins to gather up the books and papers scattered across the lab.

FADE OUT.

END.